

What is claimed is:

1. A device for controlling telephone usage, comprising:
  - a switch coupled between a telephone line and a telephone wherein the switch completes a circuit between the telephone line and the telephone to allow a phone call to proceed when in a first position and obstructs a circuit between the telephone line and telephone to prevent a phone call from proceeding when in a second position;
  - a reference clock; and
  - a processor operatively coupled to the reference clock and the switch, the processor being configured to control the position of the switch based on a comparison of a time reference to a time from the reference clock.
2. The device of claim 1, further comprising a memory configured to store the time reference, the memory being operatively coupled to the processor.
3. The device of claim 2, wherein the time reference is an amount of time that a call may proceed and wherein the processor causes the switch to move from the first position to the second position when the amount of time that the call may proceed has expired.
4. The device of claim 3, wherein the processor is further coupled to the telephone line, is further configured to interpret number tones transmitted through the telephone line, and is further configured to control the position of the switch based on whether a dialed number begins with a 1 thereby indicating a long distance call such that the processor moves the switch from the first position to the second position only when the call is long distance and when the amount of time that the call may proceed has expired.
5. The device of claim 3, wherein the memory also stores telephone numbers, and wherein the processor is further coupled to the telephone line, is further configured to interpret number tones transmitted through the telephone line, and is further configured to control the position of the switch based on whether a dialed number is a telephone number stored in memory such that the processor moves the switch from the first position

to the second position only when the call is to a number stored in memory and when the amount of time that the call may proceed has expired.

6. The device of claim 5, wherein the memory stores an individual time reference for each stored telephone number and wherein the processor refers to the individual time reference for the dialed number when determining when to move the position of the switch.

7. The device of claim 2, wherein the time reference is an interval of time when a call may not proceed and wherein the processor causes the switch to move to the second position during the interval in response to a dialed number.

8. The device of claim 7, wherein the processor is further coupled to the telephone line, is further configured to interpret number tones transmitted through the telephone line, and is further configured to control the position of the switch based on whether a dialed number begins with a 1 thereby indicating a long distance call such that the processor causes the switch to move to the second position only when the dialed number is long distance during the interval.

9. The device of claim 7, wherein the memory also stores telephone numbers, and wherein the processor is further coupled to the telephone line, is further configured to interpret number tones transmitted through the telephone line, and is further configured to control the position of the switch based on whether a dialed number is a telephone number stored in memory such that the processor causes the switch to move to the second position only when the dialed number is a number stored in memory during the interval.

10. The device of claim 7, wherein the processor is further coupled to the telephone line, is further configured to interpret number tones transmitted through the telephone line, and is further configured to cause the switch to remain in the first position during the interval when the dialed number is 911 but move to the second position during the interval for any other dialed number.

11. The device of claim 2, further comprising a keypad and wherein the processor is configured to receive the time reference through the keypad and store the time reference in the memory.

12. The device of claim 3, further comprising an annunciator operatively coupled to the processor and wherein the processor is further configured to activate the annunciator to provide a warning that the call will be ended based upon the occurrence of a time reference for warning that occurs earlier in time than the time reference for moving the switch to the second position.

13. The device of claim 12, wherein the annunciator is an audio circuit.

14. The device of claim 13, further comprising a button operatively coupled to the processor and wherein the processor delays moving the switch to the second position after the occurrence of the time reference when the button is depressed after the annunciator has activated.

15. A method of controlling telephone usage, comprising:  
determining a time;  
comparing the time to a time reference; and  
completing a circuit between a telephone line and a telephone to allow a phone call to proceed when the time is different than the time reference and obstructing the circuit between the telephone line and the telephone when the time is equal to the time reference.
16. The method of claim 15, wherein the time reference is an amount of time that a call may proceed.
17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
comparing a dialed number to a stored telephone number; and  
obstructing the circuit only when the dialed number is the stored telephone number and when the time is equal to the time reference.
18. The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
detecting whether a dialed number begins with a 1; and  
obstructing the circuit only when the dialed number begins with a 1 and when the time is equal to the time reference.
19. The method of claim 15, wherein the time reference is an interval of time when a call may not proceed.
20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:  
comparing a dialed number to a stored telephone number; and  
obstructing the circuit only when the dialed number is the stored telephone number and when the time is within the time reference.
21. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
detecting whether a dialed number begins with a 1; and

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22. A device for controlling telephone usage, comprising:

a switch coupled between a telephone line and a telephone wherein the switch completes a circuit between the telephone line and the telephone to allow a phone call to proceed when in a first position and obstructs a circuit between the telephone line and telephone to prevent a phone call from proceeding when in a second position;

a memory storing a personal identification number;

a keypad; and

a processor operatively coupled to the memory, the keypad, and the switch, the processor being configured to control the position of the switch based on a comparison of a number entered through the keypad to the personal identification number such that the switch resides in the second position after dialing of a telephone number unless the entered number is the personal identification number.

23. The device of claim 22, wherein the processor is further coupled to the telephone line, is further configured to interpret number tones transmitted through the telephone line, and is further configured to cause the switch to remain in the first position when the dialed number is 911 but move to the second position during the interval for any other dialed number.

24. The device of claim 22, wherein the memory stores one or more telephone numbers and wherein the processor is further configured to control the position of the switch based on comparing a dialed number to the one or more telephone numbers such that the switch resides in the second position after dialing of the telephone number only if the dialed number is one of the one or more telephone numbers and the entered number is not the personal identification number.

25. The device of claim 22, wherein the memory stores one or more telephone numbers and wherein the processor is further configured to control the position of the switch based on comparing a dialed number to the one or more telephone numbers such that the switch resides in the second position after dialing of the telephone number only if

the dialed number is not one of the one or more telephone numbers and the entered number is not the personal identification number.

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26. A method for controlling telephone usage, comprising:  
determining a stored personal identification number;  
comparing the personal identification number to a number entered through a keypad; and  
completing a circuit between a telephone line and a telephone to allow a phone call to proceed when the entered number is the same as the personal identification number and obstructing the circuit between the telephone line and the telephone when entered number is different than the personal identification number.
27. The method of claim 26, comprising:  
detecting that 911 has been dialed; and  
maintaining the circuit between the telephone line and the telephone to allow the phone call to proceed without requiring an entered number to equal the personal identification number.
28. The method of claim 26, further comprising detecting whether a dialed telephone number begins with a 1, and wherein obstructing the circuit between the telephone line and the telephone occurs only if the dialed telephone number does begin with a 1 and the entered number is different than the personal identification number.